

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama: Qadhafi's Death Was Inevitable End of Dictatorship

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Former Libyan dictator Muammar Qadhafi's death is "a momentous day in the history of Libya," President Obama said, and marks the end of "a long and painful chapter" for its people as they continue to transition from his 42-year rule.

"Today we can definitively say that the Qadhafi regime has come to an end. The last major regime strongholds have fallen. The new government is consolidating the control over the country, and one of the world's longest-serving dictators is no more," Obama said October 20 after Libya's interim government announced Qadhafi's death.

Qadhafi had ruled Libya with "an iron fist" for more than four decades. "Basic human rights were denied, innocent civilians were detained, beaten and killed, and Libya's wealth was squandered. The enormous potential of the Libyan people was held back, and terror was used as a political weapon," the president said.

Only one year ago, the notion of a free Libya "seemed impossible," he said. "But then the Libyan people rose up, and demanded their rights," and the international community responded to their calls for help when they faced mass atrocities at the hands of Qadhafi's security forces.

Qadhafi's death and other events "prove once more that the rule of an iron fist inevitably comes to an end," Obama said.

"Across the Arab world, citizens have stood up to claim their rights. Youth are delivering a powerful rebuke to dictatorship. And those leaders who try to deny their human dignity will not succeed," he said.

The United States is committed to helping the Libyan people and Libya's Transitional National Council as they undergo what will likely be a long and sometimes difficult transition to democratic rule, Obama said.

"You have won your revolution, and now we will be a partner as you forge a future that provides dignity, freedom and opportunity," the president said.

Ambassador Susan Rice, the U.S. representative at the United Nations, said the United States was prepared to help Libya as it works to "build an inclusive, transparent, democratic government and create new economic opportunities for its citizens."

"We will support its efforts to uphold the rule of law, create essential new institutions, and protect the rights of all citizens, including women and minorities. And we will support the international community in providing the expertise and technical assistance that Libyans will need to build a brighter future," she said in an October 20 statement.

White House press secretary Jay Carney told reporters October 20 that by rising up against Qadhafi, the Libyan people had managed to take control of their country and put themselves "in a position to create a better future for the young people in Libya and future generations of Libyans."

"There are no guarantees as to what that future will look like, but they are in a far better place now because of what they achieved," Carney said.

More broadly, the 2011 protests and revolutions against autocrats in the Middle East and North Africa have "spoken more dramatically than any individual could about where the future lies in that region, and it's a future that lies with the youth of the region and those who are demanding greater democracy, greater accountability from their governments, greater freedom," he said.

## Secretary Clinton Backs Afghan Peace Efforts as "Best Hope" for Region

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — The United States remains committed to Afghanistan's peace efforts with Taliban fighters and sees the process as "the best hope" for the country and its neighbors, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Clinton spoke with Afghan President Hamid Karzai in Kabul October 20, exactly one month after former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was serving as Karzai's envoy for peace talks with Taliban rebels, was killed by a suicide bomber.

She expressed strong U.S. support for "an inclusive Afghan peace process that ends the conflict, protects the gains the Afghan people have achieved in the last 10 years, and helps bring greater stability and prosperity to the wider region."

Both Afghan and U.S. officials are looking for a peace settlement with Taliban rebels that will include having insurgents renounce violence, end their support for the al-Qaida terrorist network, and agree to live by Afghanistan's laws and constitution, including its legal protections for women and minority groups, she said.

"The hard-won rights of Afghans, including women and

minorities, must not be rolled back, and the growth of civil society must not be quashed, and the rule of law must not be threatened," Clinton said.

The secretary said reconciliation among Afghans is possible. "But success will take an inclusive national dialogue and sustained political effort not only from Afghans but from Afghanistan's neighbors," she said.

Clinton called for Pakistan to support the peace efforts, saying Islamabad is in a position to "play either a constructive or a destructive role" in getting Afghan rebels to sit at the negotiating table and achieving a settlement to end the fighting.

"We will be looking to the Pakistanis to take the lead, because the terrorists operating outside of Pakistan pose a threat to Pakistanis, as well as to Afghans and others," she said, adding that in her talks with Pakistani officials, she would push the Pakistanis "very hard as to what they are willing and able to do" to help remove safe havens for insurgent groups that allow them to threaten Afghanistan.

"We must send a clear, unequivocal message to the government and the people of Pakistan that they must be part of the solution, and that means ridding their own country of terrorists who kill their own people and who cross the border to kill," she said.

In an October 20 television interview in Kabul, Clinton told ABC News that 30,000 Pakistanis have died from terrorist attacks over the past 10 years, and that cooperation against terror "is an area that should be one of mutual cooperation."

The Obama administration was encouraged when Pakistan began taking action against the Pakistani Taliban, but Clinton said there is more that Islamabad can do against insurgents.

"You can do a lot to help us in making sure that they don't cross the border. You can help us find them when we are looking for them," she said. Pakistan can also "cut off all connections between elements of the military or the intelligence service who provide information and give advance notice — we know for a fact — to certain elements of these terrorist groups," Clinton said.

Pakistan can also help peace efforts by publicly and unequivocally stating that it wants the Afghan Taliban and their associates, including the Haqqani Network, to "begin negotiating toward a resolution with the Afghans themselves, and that they will, with us, stand behind that kind of negotiation," she said.

## U.S. Welcomes U.N. Assessment of Maritime Piracy in West Africa

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is calling for countries and regional organizations in West Africa's Gulf of Guinea to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat maritime piracy, which he says threatens to hinder economic development and undermine security in the region.

"The threat is compounded because most Gulf states have limited capacity to ensure safe maritime trade, freedom of navigation, the protection of marine resources and the safety and security of lives and property," Ban told the U.N. Security Council during an October 19 debate on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

He was joined by U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice, who called the meeting "both timely and important."

"The scourge of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has threatened the economies, governments and peoples of the region for far too long," Ambassador Rice said in remarks to the council October 19. She added that in 2011 alone, more than two dozen maritime armed robbery and piracy attacks were reported in the Gulf.

"Such attacks — whether within territorial waters or on the high seas — threaten regional and maritime security and the safety of seafarers, as well as impede economic growth across West and Central Africa," Rice said.

Rice said maritime crime has a substantial impact on local economies and has become a "crippling problem" for countries, including Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana and Nigeria. She said attacks on offshore oil facilities alone result in an estimated loss of \$2 billion annually to the regional economy, including the fishing industry and commercial shipping.

High-seas piracy transcends national boundaries and economic interests, and has a "negative impact on West Africa's trade with the rest of the world, especially with its principal trading partners in the Americas, Asia and Europe," Ban said.

Rice said patrolling and securing territorial waters rests primarily with the individual countries in the region and called on them to make maritime security a top national priority. However, she said, the international community must also do more to support regional and national efforts.

She welcomed Ban's decision to send a U.N. assessment mission to the Gulf of Guinea in November to examine

the scope of the threat and to make recommendations on an anti-piracy strategy. The United Nations said the mission will comprise representatives from its departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations, offices for West and Central Africa and Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as the International Maritime Organization.

Rice said the United States is committed to supporting this work and to working with regional programs to strengthen coordination among West and Central African countries. She said the United States has also provided approximately \$35 million in support for coastal radar, equipment, boats and associated maritime security training to West and Central African countries since 2007. Additionally, she said the U.S. Navy held joint exercises earlier in 2011 with countries across the region to help local forces improve their capacity to counter illicit maritime activities.

Ban praised these efforts and called for a continued holistic approach to countering the problem, "focusing simultaneously on security, the rule of law and development," that addresses the roots of maritime piracy as well as deterrence both on land and at sea.

### **Malaria Vaccine Candidate Yields Promising Results in Trial**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — Researchers and government health officials express measured optimism about a malaria vaccine candidate that has produced positive results in trials involving more than 15,000 children across 11 sites in seven countries in Africa, where the disease causes the most deaths.

The vaccine is known as RTS,S and it has provided "young African children with significant protection against clinical and severe malaria with an acceptable safety and tolerability profile," according to the October 18 press announcement made by the Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Biologicals, two of the main partner organizations that conducted the trial.

The vaccine works by prompting the body's immune system to defend itself against *Plasmodium falciparum*, the malaria parasite carried by mosquitoes. The vaccine was first developed at GSK Biologicals headquarters in Belgium and was successfully tested on U.S. adult volunteers. The current trial results from a proposal by MVI that RTS,S could be useful in protecting African children, who make up about 90 percent of the some 800,000 fatalities caused by malaria each year.

Researchers collected data on the first 6,000 children 12

months after they received three doses of the vaccine. Those aged 5 to 17 months were shown to have reduced risk of clinical malaria — marked by fever and chills — by 56 percent. Children had a 47 percent lower risk of contracting severe malaria, which becomes a medical emergency with a patient exhibiting coma, severe anemia, respiratory distress and potential organ damage.

The consequences of severe malaria in children can be persistent and debilitating. If the disease reaches the brain, cerebral malaria can develop, which can lead to long-term trouble with movement, palsies, speech difficulties, deafness and blindness.

Dr. Tsiri Agbenyega, a principal investigator of the trial, called the results "an important milestone in the development of RTS,S."

Rajiv Shah, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator, welcomed the initial evidence for the vaccine. "The vaccine, as a new addition to our present package [of] malaria control interventions, could result in further major reductions in severe malaria cases and deaths," Shah said in a press statement. "RTS,S as a first-generation vaccine is an important first step in collaborative efforts to develop the next generation of even more effective vaccines."

The research to find an effective vaccine has been conducted at the same time international health donors have been working to step up malaria prevention with distribution and information campaigns about the use of bed nets to protect from biting mosquitoes and household spraying to deter the insects.

"Over the past five years, global action to combat malaria has saved an estimated 1.1 million lives in sub-Saharan Africa," Shah said. "African countries are now poised to achieve the first great humanitarian victory of the 21st century: near-zero child deaths from malaria."

Efforts to reduce the incidence of malaria and the fatalities it causes have been pursued under a number of U.S. programs, including the President's Malaria Initiative, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Health Initiative. The United States has also been a major contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Striving to improve children's health has been an imperative of these efforts, in the belief that healthy children can become healthy, productive adults who have greater capability to thrive in their own lives and as citizens of their countries. A few studies conducted in recent years have demonstrated that the occurrence of chronic disease with lifelong consequences can keep adults in lifelong poverty and stifle national aspirations

for development.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been an important global donor and a moral force in mustering support for improving health in the world's poor. The MVI-GSK results, in fact, were announced at a Gates Foundation Malaria Forum, upon their publication in the New England Journal of Medicine.

"A vaccine is the simplest, most cost-effective way to save lives," Gates said in a statement. "These results demonstrate the power of working with partners to create a malaria vaccine that has the potential to protect millions of children from this devastating disease."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collaborated with the Kenya Medical Research Institute to conduct the trial at one of the East African sites. CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden said in a press release that data to be collected in the future will be critical to understanding the usefulness of RTS,S. "Those data, expected in 2012 and 2014 ... will be critical to understanding how the vaccine may be used to control malaria," Frieden said.

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